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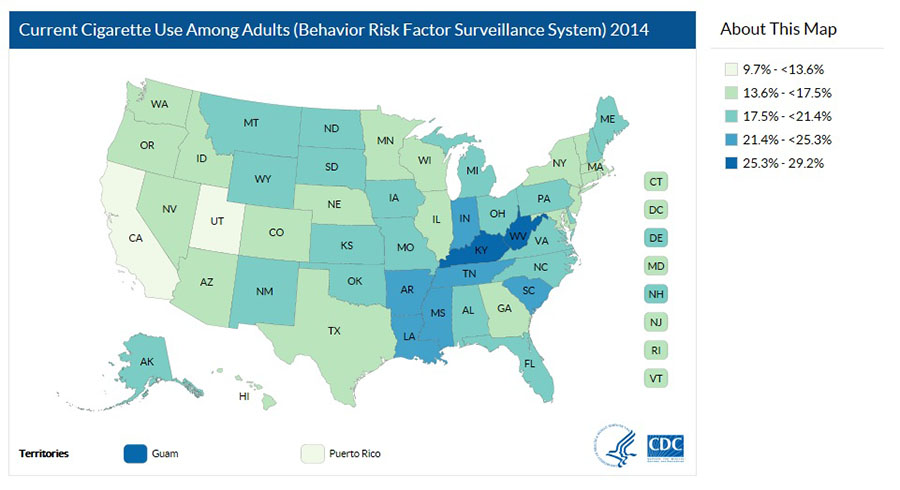
English 201

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Anti-Smoking advertisements and their effectiveness

Audience: People who smoke

At this day-in-age, American citizens are subject to hundreds of advertisements on a daily basis. These advertisements come in various forms that are in various locations: television, radio, newspaper, internet, etc. On a daily basis we see these advertisements whether it be subconscious or consciously noticed. Many advertisements are very affective, such as Doritos commercials when you’re hungry, vacation commercials when you want to get away, or even commercials about online dating when you are feeling lonely. But in this paper, I want to talk about a very specific type of commercial that might actually appear more than any others—anti-smoking advertisements.

(“current)

The image above represents current cigarette use among adults in the United States and its territories. The highest amount of adult smokers within the United States are all clumped together and from there disperses into lower smoking states. Many of the states that have the highest smoking rates have the lowest incomes, this may have something to do with anti-smoking advertisements. It’s possible that these low income families are not exposed to as many advertisements due to lack of funds in their area. If the people of the lower income states are not exposed to the advertisements, that means they have no effect on their decisions. We see that higher income states also have lower smoking rates as well. Maybe this is because people are more exposed to anti-smoking advertisements.

As many Americans know, smoking is really bad for your health and can lead to serious health issues and even death. However, public health reports that “Scrambling to keep customers buying their product, tobacco industry giants began their decades-long effort to move smoking out of the public health arena and into the domain of medicine” and later say “Clever advertising strategy included alignment with physicians, cementing the notion that smoking was a healthy habit” (“Health). All of this was back in the 1950’s in order to keep many people continue or start smoking. These advertisements must have done some good for the tobacco companies because Mike Esterl reports that there are still forty million smokers in the America (Esterl). That is still a large number, so on the opposite-end—are the anti-smoking advertisements doing any good? People like Debra Goldschmidt of CNN would say that they are helping. In her article she says “Fewer than 15% of U.S. adults currently smoke” whereas the rates were way higher before the anti-smoking advertisements started (Goldschmidt). However, people such as Jon Brooks disagrees with people like Goldschmidt. Many people have different opinions, so lets look at the facts that we know.

If I were to go sit down and watch about an hour of television, I could almost guarantee that I would see a commercial talking about how bad smoking is to the body. If I were to listen to Pandora for about an hour, I would also probably hear an advertisement that involves anti-smoking. It seems like everywhere we turn, anti-smoking advertisements seem to be within our outlook. Even with so many advertisements telling us to not smoke, we still have a lot of people who smoke on a daily basis. This paper will be consumed in reasons why these advertisements work and why they don’t work. By the end of this paper, I want my readers to know if these advertisements are affective or if they are just a waste of time.

Many people believe that anti-smoking advertisements are ineffective in their pursuit to get people to quit smoking. Jon Brooks is associated with the group that believes the anti-smoking advertisements are not working. In his article "Why Anti-Smoking Ads Make You Smoke More, Gain Weight and Waste Money," he describes to his readers that these kind of advertisements are actually making things worse. He states in his article “In fact, there is growing psychological research that suggests these types of anti-smoking ads are not just ineffective but can make the process of giving up harder than it already is. (Oh, they can also make you gain weight too.)” (Brooks). Contrary to what Brooks says in his article, Susan M. Liss says in her article that anti-smoking advertisements have helped many people. She states “national advertising campaign exceeded all expectations, driving 1.6 million smokers to try to quit and helping more than 100,000 to succeed” (Liss). She believes that getting that many people to stop smoking was a success and a lot of credit was attributed to the advertisements.

While many people like Brooks think that these advertisements are not working, many also believe that they are affective. People like Robert Preidt and Susan Liss believe that the anti-smoking advertisements are actually affective in their quest to get people to stop or at least try to stop smoking. Preidt says in his article “A national anti-smoking campaign featuring tips from former smokers was highly successful and cost-effective, a new study reports” (Preidt). Other people would also agree with the statement that anti-smoking advertisements work. The difference with Elizabeth Kulze is she think that only a few are actually good at getting their point across. She says that the ones that make the most impact on people are “scare-tactics, guilt-tripping, even humor” (Kulze). Many people think that these anti-smoking advertisements can be affective, but there are also many who think that these advertisements are not working too.

Every day people see an advertisement telling people how bad smoking is and that they should quit. But do these people even consider quitting after seeing or hearing about how bad smoking is for the body? People like Andrew Gelman believe that they don’t served their purpose. He quotes Joel Keller in his article saying “The CDC keeps promoting these ads despite evidence that they don’t really work, at least not for people who are trying to quit” (qtd. In Gelman).They both believe that the advertisements that they see and hear will have little to no effect on people who smoke already. Many people agree with what Gelman says, but has anybody ever done any research to prove or disprove this theory?

Evan Lerner talks in his article about an experiment that was conducted on seventy-one individuals who were smokers and didn’t plan on quitting. For the experiment, these seventy-one smokers were split up into two separate groups and they both watched different anti-smoking advertisements. One group was set to watch weak advertisements and the other group was to watch strong anti-smoking advertisements. On the day they were watching the advertisements, every participant was asked to take a urine sample to see how high the content of cotinine (tells how much nicotine had entered the body) was in their body. Also, they used an fMRI machine which depicts how their brain is reacting to the advertisements they were watching. When the results came back, the group that had watched the stronger anti-smoking advertisements had a reduced cotinine content in their urine in which the fMRI machine had predicted. The result came back that people who watched the stronger advertisements may not have quit smoking, but reduced the amount they consumed (Lerner). For the people who believe that anti-smoking advertisements can actually make an impact on even the most stubborn smokers, here is a little evidence to support your theory.

On the other hand, other research has been done to possible prove that they are not affective. Eric Leas and company conducted research to see if anti-smoking advertisements were helping people quit or at least consider it. In their research, they asked people of different age groups (18-44, 45-64) who were all smokers over a sixty-five day span if certain commercials had affected their decision to smoke. In the age group that consisted of eighteen to forty-four, they found that after sixty-five days the smoking rate went down 7.2 percent. In the second age group they found that smokers actually increased their smoking rates by 7.2 percent. These advertisements seemed to work better for a certain age group than the other. They also did more tests into certain areas such as the amount of education people had or even how many children they had. Many of the baseline reading however increased after the sixty-five day span (Leas).

With as many commercials and other anti-smoking advertisements out, it costs a lot of money to put out these ads that might not even be affective. Health Day news reports that “The Tips From Former Smokers campaign spent $480 per smoker who quit and $393 per year of life saved, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found” (Preidt). They also found that the campaigns will “save about 179,000 healthy life-years at a cost of $268 per year of healthy life gained. The campaign will also help prevent about 17,000 premature deaths” (Preidt). A lot of these facts come straight from the CDC (Center for Disease Control) and they believe that every last dollar is worth saving these live. They are confident in the anti-smoking advertisements ability to get smokers to at least consider quitting.

Millions of people all across the globe decide every day that picking up a cigarette is a necessity in their lives. A study done by Richard G. Niemeyer, J. Craig Andrews, and Scot Burton estimated that 24.7 percent of all males smoke and 20.8 percent of all women smoke. Along with that, they say “tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of mortality in this country, contributing to more than 440,000 deaths each year and resulting in $75 billion in direct costs and about $150 billion in total tobacco-related disease costs” (Niemeyer). Research they did found that “over a 2-year period (1990-1991), an anti-tobacco media campaign conducted in California was estimated to have reduced the number of packs of cigarettes sold in that state by 232 million.'''^ It was also estimated that this campaign was an important factor in the decisions of 6.7% of Californians to quit, and 34.3% of the state's former smokers reported that the campaign played a role in their decision to quit” (Niemeyer). This helps prove that, at least in that state, these advertisements may actually have had an effect on smoker’s decisions to quit or not. On the other hand, Andrew Gelman reports that the CDC did its own research in order to see how affective these advertisements were in the general public. He says that out of the 1.6 million people they sought out to get to quit, only 100,000 people actually quit. In his own words he says “It’s a tough addiction to quit, and manipulating the emotions and scaring the crap out of millions just to get 100,000 people to quit is an annoyingly inefficient use of resources” (Gelman). These two articles contradict each other even though they are based on the same research. One source says that they are helping and the other says not so much, so who do you believe?

Making these anti-smoking advertisements can be tricky. Different advertisements appeal to different age groups, genders, and ethnicities. Kulze says in her article that the CDC plans on releasing some advertisements that are aimed at twelve to seventeen year olds. She quotes Matthew Zeller—the director of the FDA’s Center for Tobacco Products—in her article by saying “The ads are based on studies that show teens are often more worried about their appearance today than their long-term risk of cancer”(qtd. In Kulze)**.** With that being said, I would say that older ages would probably care more about their health than their appearance; this advertisement for the younger generations will most likely be ineffective for the older generations. When these anti-smoking campaign groups are making these advertisements, they can’t appeal to every single subgroup—they have to pick and choose which groups to appeal to.

In my research, I decided that interviewing three individuals would be the best way to get answers from three different subgroups. I interviewed three different individuals, but I didn’t think that would be good enough for my research. I wanted my three individuals to be from different subgroups of people so I could get a possibility of different answers from each individual. My first individual (Ross Allen) is a smoker who is a white male around the age of twenty. My second individual (Mahaylee Lewis) is a non-smoker who is a white female around the age of twenty. My final individual (John Johnston) is an ex-smoker who is a white male around the age of seventy. I believed that having these three individuals of different age and gender would improve my potential answers. For every interview I did, I started them off by talking about tobacco companies and if they did enough to tell their customers about the dangers of smoking. Secondly, I would ask them if anti-smoking commercials had, or has any effect on their decisions to smoke or not smoke. Then, after I got all of their personal opinions, I had them watch a short video on YouTube. This video contained an anti-smoking advertisement that did a very good job at hitting all genders, races, and age groups. After they were through watching the video, I proceeded to ask them if that video had any effect on them. I also then asked if they thought the video did an effective job of getting the message across and if they thought it might help other people gain momentum to quit smoking. I really wanted to know how these different individuals from different backgrounds thought about anti-smoking advertisements.

My first individual (Ross Allen) was my smoker in the group of three individuals. He said in his interview that tobacco companies don’t do enough to warn their consumers about the dangers of smoking, but he also said they shouldn’t have to because that would be a bad marketing scheme—yes, he is a marketing major so I guess I should have seen that one coming. He then continued by saying that anti-smoking advertisements have had little or no effect on his decision to smoke or not. Then I had him watch the video, which really made him think about how smoking around children can be bad, but his concern was only for that of the children in the video. When I asked him about how affective he thought the anti-smoking advertisements are, he said that many smokers don’t care about the advertisements and it doesn’t have an effect on them. Adding to that, my third individual (John Johnston) said that when he was smoking, those advertisements had no effect on his thought process when it came to smoking. However, he said that when he quit smoking, he paid way more attention to the commercials than before and they actually had a great effect in his efforts to never start again. My second individual (Mahaylee Lewis) has never smoked a day in her life and said the advertisements scare her. She said that they definitely had an impact on her and she would never want to start because of the commercials of all the bay things that can happen. When I showed the video to both my second and third individual, they both had similar reactions. My non-smoker said that it scared her from even being around other people who smoke. My ex-smoker said he couldn’t believe he ever started in the first place and just kind of shook his head in shame. Two of my individuals thought that anti-smoking advertisements were affective in the end, while my first individual (The smoker) doesn’t think that they have any effect on him personally or any other smoker. The reaction I got from my ex-smoker when he said that it didn’t use to matter when he did smoke, but now they do—this caught my attention because my current smoker said these advertisements didn’t matter to him. This experiment really showed me the thought process of people from different groups of people.

My findings from the primary research I conducted in my interviews and the secondary research that I found have lead me to believe that these advertisements are affective. Within my paper, we read about the experiment that Evan Lerner wrote about in his article. That research really showed me that these advertisements really did have an effect on people’s minds, even if they don’t see it. In the experiment, it didn’t get the people who smoked to quit, but it did get them to slow down and that’s a start. Even in the Eric Leas experiment they found that some groups of people had actually decreased the amount of cigarettes they consumed. Also, Richard G. Niemeyer wrote about an experiment in California that concluded in people lowering their smoking consumption. Along with that, the CDC did an experiment that concluded in 100,000 people who quit with a direct correlation to the advertisements.

One thing that does make this controversial is something that happened in my own interview. Both my ex-smoker and my current smoker both said that while they were smoking, these commercials had no effect on their decisions. Many smokers think just like the two people who have smoked in their lifetimes and this can mean that the target audience of smokers really don’t care about these advertisements. The whole point of these advertisements is to get the number of people who do smoke, to quit or slow down. If all of the smokers are ignoring the advertisements, then there is actually little purpose in having the advertisements.

One thing that I believe is a good thing for future advertisements is that they are targeting an audience who has yet to start smoking. These advertisements are very strong and are showing these younger people just what smoking can do to the body. To support this claim, my interview with the non-smoker made it very obvious that she was afraid to start smoking. She said that the advertisement I had shown her had actually frightened her. The advertisements on display these days are meant to stop younger people from ever starting the bad habit and the young girl I interviewed was a testament to that.

In my paper, I found many sources that indicated both sides of the argument. I had experiments that had an argument for both sides of the argument and even my personal interviews was not in favor of one side or the other. After all of the research I conducted, I believe that the evidence says that some anti-smoking advertisements are affective in their attempt to get smokers to quit or slow down. As shown in the Lerner case, only the strong advertisements are affective however.

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